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As deans and directors of agriculture, you are certainly aware of the educational opportunities that await the agricultural student who has acquired knowledge in the pertinent disciplines of your field.

As a former educator and as one who has been involved in educational administration, I have some firsthand understanding of the problems and difficulties that beset the educational community. Today I am an administrator in the federal government and it is largely from that perspective that I wish to share my thoughts with you.

My topic, "Minorities' Stake in Agriculture," is most timely because it relates in a fundamental way to the search for new public policy goals and directions that have been initiated by Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland. Last March the secretary initiated a study and national dialogue on the issues affecting the future of agriculture and public policy.

The subject of farm structure is not new. What is new is the interest it is now generating and the growing recognition of its importance to everyone.

There is nothing peculiar about agriculture which raises these issues or gives them importance. We live in an age that allows us to be increasingly aware of the importance of political and economic structures in our lives.

We often think of the automotive industry as "Detroit" and the oil industry as "OPEC." This country has been engaged during the 1960's and the 1970's in a series of national debates on civil rights, energy, employment, health, environment, and other issues in which present and future courses of governmental action are of direct interest to Americans.

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Remarks by Dr. Joan S. Wallace, Assistant Secretary for Administration, at the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges Summer Workshop Conference for deans and directors of agriculture, Burlington, Vermont, July 25, 1979.

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In agriculture, we have been so long absorbed in specific problems of economics and technology that we are only now beginning to look hard at the fundamental problems of farm structure--where we are, how we got here, and what ought to be the future policy considerations.

The concept of structure is perhaps too broad. The main elements are summed up in the old expression: "Who does what to whom, and who pays." But that is too general.

To make a dialogue more fruitful we must operationalize the concept and give it more specificity.

At a minimum, the components of farm structure include:

- o Numbers and sizes of farms and how they vary regionally and by type of farm.
- o The ownership and control of resources, including form of business organization, tenure, and arrangements used to coordinate farm sector with other sectors.
- o Barriers to entry and exit in the farm sector.
- o The social and economic characteristics of farm operators and owners.

Our current farm structure results from the interplay of economic, technical, social and institutional forces operating since the beginning of our country. For example, the original land settlement patterns--homesteading, reclamation, and plantations--have been major determinants of numbers and sizes of farms.

The present structure has evolved in response to these factors, largely without serious public consideration of the type of structures desired or being obtained. Thus, the structure existing today is a by-product of many historical antecedents rather than a considered and explicitly stated goal.

Why does the structure matter? Because the structure of agriculture affects:

- o Economic efficiency.
- o The future of rural areas and rural communities.
- o Broader social considerations--people migration, energy use and conservation.
- o Something else that encompasses values, beliefs and the whole social fabric of America.

The major reason for considering structural issues relates to the objectives, ideals, values, and goals of both society as a whole and those who are most directly affected--farm owners, tenants, laborers, marketers, and consumers.

Recent years have brought serious questions relating to these dimensions of the structure issue. The evidence of structural shortcomings in our agricultural system, as characterized by trends, increasingly alarms many people. These trends and the public's concern about them give rise to policy questions we must now face.

In response to this awakened interest, Secretary Bergland has directed that a major study of U.S. food and agriculture policy be conducted to:

- o Define, research, and analyze issues pertaining to the social and economic organization of farms.
- o Disseminate research results and develop a national dialogue on these issues.
- o Develop a policy agenda for the Department of Agriculture in the light of study findings and public discussions.

The study will take over a year and a half to complete. It is the secretary's plan to have the studies completed before debate on the 1981 farm bill.



As a major part of this effort, a series of meetings will be held in all regions of the country. The secretary is determined to have the broadest possible participation in the review and in the dialogue. This is where you and the organizations that you represent can play a key role.

You see the entire spectrum of needs and challenges in rural America. You can bring to the discussions the kind of independent and informed perspective we need. You will have the opportunity to define the issues that relate to education and the educational community, as well as the broader issues pertaining to the minorities' stake in agriculture.

A single contact has been established in the Department of Agriculture from which specific details of meetings can be obtained.

Inquiries should be directed to:

Project Coordinator

Structure of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Washington, D.C. 20250

I will now turn to the theme of your conference, "Students: Attracting, Retaining, and Educating," as it relates to the subject that I have been asked to discuss. I have also been asked to comment on how minority enrollment in agriculture can be increased? And how can the land grant colleges and the Department of Agriculture work together toward accomplishing this goal.

I can best respond to these questions from the vantage point of the roles and responsibilities that I fulfill as Assistant Secretary for Administration.

Among my responsibilities at the Department of Agriculture is the Office of Personnel, which is attempting to implement the Civil Service Reform Act that became effective January 1. Under the impetus of this legislation major new initiatives are underway.

While the department has established a Senior Executive Service, an area of significant concern to Secretary Bergland and me is the underrepresentation of minority personnel in the various agencies of the department.

The secretary has expressed disappointment over the previous failure of the department to demonstrate positive change in minority employment statistics. In an attempt to countervail this situation, I have restructured our Office of Equal Opportunity to accelerate the pace of change.

One of the managerial tools that we are using is what is termed the equal employment opportunity evaluation and planning system. This is a first step toward a built-in self-evaluation system.

What we have done is establish a tracking procedure involving a list of 25 key job series in the department with a promotion potential beyond Grade GS-11 which contains the largest number of permanent employees.

Using computer printouts from our National Finance Center, agencies are required to "track" activity within three of these key job series they are using.

The department will be applying a uniform statistical formula to determine the adverse impact (underutilization, underrepresentation, and unequal grade distribution) on minorities.

Agency affirmative action plans will be submitted this year in a new format requiring managers to participate in planning and decisionmaking processes, and to stand accountable for their decisions and actions.

In our preliminary efforts we are finding some interesting facts as we look at the professionals employed by the department.

- o Of the 876 persons employed as economists, less than 5 percent are minorities.
- o Of the 600 range conservationists, there are no black professionals.
- o Of the 1,778 soil conservationists, there are 85 blacks.
- o Of the 2,100 veterinarians, 85 are black.

We are finding the dearth of black employees in these various job series is, in part, related to the educational pool.

Equally important, minority people do not seem to be aware of, or enthusiastic about, career possibilities in Agriculture Department agencies. There are, of course, historical and sociological factors that account for such behavior. Nevertheless, the fact remains that minority people are not plugged into the department labor market.

Because so few blacks and other minorities are enrolled in the study of agriculture and its allied fields, we are also faced with "we can't find them" explanations.

Perhaps you will agree with me that student motivation and enrollment are related to the realities of the marketplace. If the employment prospects are bright, then the incentives for recruitment and study are strong. Conversely, when the employment prospects are dim it acts as a damper to recruitment and successful education.

While the problem of higher education for minorities is of critical concern as it relates to agriculture, the issue is obviously much broader.

The National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities, headed by Dr. Elias Blake, president of Clark College, issued a recent report entitled, "Access of Black Americans to Higher Education--How Open is the Door?" I would like to quote the following highlights from the executive summary of this report:

"Black students themselves cite a lack of encouragement (from school officials) to participate in college preparatory programs with a resultant automatic channeling into trade schools or community colleges.

"The new competency testing movement will likely be another barrier to full black participation in higher education unless the present emphasis is shifted from detailing of student inadequacies to improving the student's learning experience."



A growing number of black students continue to pursue some form of post-secondary education, despite barriers. The quality of that participation deserves assessment. The status of black student involvement in higher education is revealed by data gathered in the fall of 1976:

- o Over one million black students (9.3 percent of the total higher education enrollment) were pursuing some form of higher education.
- o Almost half of the black first-time freshmen were from families with income of \$8,000 or less, compared with 7 percent of white freshmen.
- o Approximately 42 percent of all blacks enrolled at all levels of higher education were in two-year or community colleges, compared with about one-third of all white students enrolled.
- o Forty-five percent of all black undergraduates were in two-year colleges as were 55 percent of all black first-time freshmen.
- o Fifteen percent of the black students in higher education were enrolled at the university level compared with 27 percent of the white students.
- o Thirty percent of all blacks in higher education were in colleges where they represented the majority (18 percent in the historically black colleges, and 12 percent in the newer and predominantly black colleges which have generally been established in areas of large minority/black population).
- o Eighty percent of the blacks in the newer predominantly black colleges were in two-year or community colleges.

Despite a general impression that substantial increases of black students were being made in law and medical school admissions throughout the early 1970's, the increases peaked in 1971. A consistent decline from that point has resulted in a reduction of 173 in the number of black first-year law school students, and of 21 in the number of black first-year medical school students from 1977 to 1978.

This is clearly a case of the reversal of progress. Emphasizing the areas of weakness as well as strengths in black progress will hopefully serve as an early warning system and avoid further reversal of progress in other sectors of higher education.

To view total enrollment gains in isolation from the quality of participation and the end product--college graduation--is dangerous. In the fall of 1972, black students comprised 8.4 percent of the full-time undergraduate enrollment in the United States. Four years later, 6.4 percent of the baccalaureate degrees conferred went to black students.

It is evident that the rates of access and of graduation decline as the level of training rises. Blacks represented 10.2 percent of the undergraduate enrollment but only 6 percent of the graduate school and 4.5 percent of the professional school enrollment in the fall of 1976.

Associate degrees and other less-than-four-year-graduation awards to blacks comprised 3.4 percent, while doctorates awarded to blacks represented 3.6 percent of the total degrees award in 1975-76.

The picture among agricultural institutions appear to be even more bleak.

According to the enrollment figures compiled by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Higher Institutions during November 1978, of a total agricultural enrollment of 111,759, there were 2,419 minority students, or about 2.16 percent of the total enrolled in agriculture studies. Compare this with the figure of 8.4 percent of the total black enrollment of all students taking undergraduate studies in the United States and the educational status of blacks in agriculture and it is alarmingly low.

What should we do about it?

We are trying to encourage the youth that there are opportunities in agriculture.

Some students attending some of our inner city institutions should be recruited by agricultural educational institutions. Dr. Humphries of Tennessee State University informed me that his school has had a favorable experience with students from urban centers studying agriculture.

I have established in the Office of Equal Opportunity a university affairs unit headed by Dr. David Houston, who is on an Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignment from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

Among his duties is to work with college presidents and deans of 1890 land grant institutions. They provide us with valuable ideas and input on mechanisms for increasing the level of participation of minorities in the academic world and the recruiting of graduates for the Department of Agriculture.

The Office of University Affairs is providing staff support for the department's task force to implement President Carter's directive to strengthen historically black institutions of higher learning.

The department has expanded its cooperative program that is targeting assistance to economically deprived students so they can obtain on-the-job experience while pursuing their college training.

We are also working on a program to stress the importance of agriculture as a career opportunity and its vital role in our economy.

I am sure that there are fruitful modes of interchange between the Agriculture Department and academia. There has been, as you well know, a long and entrenched tradition of reciprocal ties between the department and land grant institutions. These earlier models can now be applied, with appropriate modifications, to the formation and development of creative patterns of rapprochement between the Department of Agriculture and historically black land grant colleges and institutions.

In order to accomplish this goal, educational leaders like you must be tuned into the needs and priorities of our department, just as we must understand your needs and priorities.

The Department of Agriculture has resources of money, programs, and people, and it also has mandated legislative commitments and priorities which are constantly undergoing scrutiny and revision.

New societal imperatives such as energy, environment, and international trade have an impact on program priorities and needs, as well as allocation of resources. If you are attuned to these processes of decisionmaking in the organization you will be in a position to respond to the needs of the organization appropriately. In this way you will be able to establish vital links with programs and people in the organization. I will be happy, as I have in the past, to play a facilitative and catalyst role.

I will conclude by closing the circle and returning to my assigned topic, "Minorities' Stake in Agriculture."

It is quite obvious to me that the stakes are high, but so are the payoffs.

We have to move patiently and persistently together in creating new and innovative mechanisms of mutual support. If we can demonstrate that our needs and interests mesh, even though our missions might be different, then the exchange process will occur more spontaneously and smoothly. We need each other.

My principal message to you today is that there is need for increased partnership between the federal government and the black colleges and institutions which you represent.

Thank you.

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**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250**

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